

Great Wood Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124138
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328064
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	96
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Buckley
Headteacher	Pauline Robins
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Vicarage Road Upper Tean Stoke-on-Trent ST10 4JY

Age group	4–11
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Inspection number	328064

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Age group 4–11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small, rural school has seen a decline in numbers since the previous inspection and there have been several changes of staff since that time. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times, particularly around Year 4, is above average. At present, all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school does not have its own Nursery although there is a privately-run Nursery on site. The school's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has only Reception-aged children. Apart from Years 5 and 6, all pupils are taught in mixed-age groups for at least part of the time. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, though broadly average overall, varies significantly in different year groups.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It cares well for its pupils, ensuring their health, safety and well-being. Pupils recognise and appreciate this, as do their parents. Comments such as 'children are at ease' and 'grow in confidence' in the 'family atmosphere' are typical of the responses to the inspection questionnaire. Pupils say that 'teachers look after you' and 'make school fun', and that they feel safe and secure in school.

Children make good progress in the EYFS and satisfactory progress thereafter. Changes in staffing since the previous inspection have hindered some of the improvements the school set out to achieve. Nevertheless, it has improved standards in writing and last year turned to mathematics with the same enthusiasm. It is too early for these actions to have had an effect on standards in mathematics in 2008, especially as other factors relating to that year group affected standards in this subject. There are clear signs that progress is improving in the work of pupils currently in the school, for example in pupils' ability to learn and rapidly recall number facts. However, the school does not yet place enough emphasis on encouraging pupils to use and apply their number skills to solve mathematical problems. Overall, standards are average in English and mathematics.

Teachers form good relationships with their pupils and they plan activities that broadly match the pupils' different ages and stages of learning. The curriculum provides a sound basis for linking different subjects together and this is making learning more enjoyable and relevant for the pupils. However, there is scope for the school to provide more opportunities for pupils to practise basic skills in all subjects. Pupils have targets for English and mathematics but, while they know what their targets are, they are not sufficiently involved in assessing their progress towards them. Teachers' marking rarely shows pupils how to improve their work, thereby missing opportunities to help pupils see how to do this for themselves. While teachers regularly record pupils' progress, they do not always use assessment information well enough to move the more able pupils on to the more challenging work of which they are capable, especially in mathematics.

The headteacher, supported by the governors, gives the school clear direction and has kept it moving forward through its period of turbulence. The school development plan and the action plan for mathematics have a manageable number of priorities. However, these are not expressed in such a way as to enable the school to measure their impact on pupils' progress. Regular checks are made on teaching and learning but they do not always identify areas for improvement and where they do, it is not clear how these are followed up. Nevertheless, there is a good sense of teamwork amongst the staff as each becomes more aware of their individual responsibility for pupils' achievement throughout the school. This and the recent improvements in writing and mathematics give the school satisfactory capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children start school with the skills and experiences typically expected for their age. They make good progress and standards at the end of Reception are slightly above average. Children enjoy their work, participating eagerly in all activities as they explore the world around them. They share things well, are sociable and enjoy healthy snack times. They get on well with each other and with adults, showing their care for others by their willingness to help. They behave well.

Lively, demanding teaching, with high expectations, is based firmly on the well planned curriculum for this age group. Within this, there is a good balance of taught activities and those the children select for themselves. However, while staff take children into the outdoor learning area on a daily basis, the use of the area as an outdoor classroom is not well enough established to enable children to have spontaneous access to it.

Staff look after the children well, placing good emphasis on their welfare and well-being. They guide children effectively in their learning, helping them to know how well they are doing and where they can do better. Children appreciate the different approaches used, for example, 'thumbs up' or 'happy clouds'. Assessment information is shared with parents regularly. The good links formed with parents prior to their children starting school benefit the children's learning throughout their Reception Year.

What the school should do to improve further

- In mathematics, improve pupils' ability to use and apply number skills to solve mathematical problems, and ensure that the more able pupils are always given sufficiently demanding work to do.
- Make sure teachers use all assessment information more effectively to accelerate pupils' learning, that they involve pupils in assessment and target setting, and that their marking gives pupils clear pointers on how to improve.
- Sharpen the school development and subject action plans, making the priorities more specific and progress towards them more clearly measurable.
- Improve the clarity and focus of all monitoring and evaluation to achieve the school's priorities.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress. Progress in reading and writing has improved over time as a result of the school's actions, as have standards in English overall. Progress in mathematics has been more variable, but evidence in school shows it is now satisfactory and improving. Standards were significantly below average in Year 2 in 2008. The considerable movement of pupils in and out of the school and the above average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in that year group had a major impact on the outcomes for the small number of pupils concerned. The school's records show that despite this, all pupils made at least expected progress.

The unvalidated test results for Year 6 in 2008 were broadly average, though significantly below average in mathematics. Here again, high levels of pupil mobility, particularly after Year 4, affected the outcomes, and data in school show that some pupils did not perform as well in the tests as their work in class indicated. Two main issues, both of which the school recognises and is now addressing, affect progress in mathematics. They are that insufficient attention has been given to number work and problem solving, and more able pupils are not always given sufficiently demanding work to do. Nevertheless, signs of the early success in the school's efforts to tackle issues in mathematics are evident in the pupils' recognising that they know their tables better and are beginning to make better progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school a lot, as their good attendance shows. They talk about the 'lots of different activities' they have to do, about how well their teachers look after them, and quote mathematics as one of their favourite subjects. They have a good understanding of how to live healthily. They participate fully in the many sporting activities available to them, make healthy choices at lunchtimes and take this learning home with them. For example, as one pupil put it, 'my mum gives me 5-a-day now'.

Pupils feel safe in school. They trust the staff, and appreciate and follow the rules they help to draw up, which ensure their good behaviour. They report that pupils are 'all really friendly', that 'play leaders are helpful' in the playground and that they know of no bullying or harassment. They readily accept responsibility for various jobs around the school, including as school councillors, and make a good contribution to the school and local community. Through their study of different religions and religious festivals, pupils are better informed about cultural diversity than at the previous inspection. However, this is still the weakest aspect of their personal development. Their satisfactory progress and overall good personal development mean that pupils leave the school adequately prepared for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers form good relationships with their pupils. Pupils report that 'teachers make school fun' because they give them 'exciting things' to do. Teachers know their pupils well and make a good contribution to their personal development and well-being. Pupils concentrate well in class. Their enjoyment was clear in a good mathematics lesson observed during the inspection. Here, the increasing demand for more detailed answers and a more complex range of calculations challenged the more able pupils well and successfully enabled others to learn from them. This good practice is not evident throughout the school, however. Teachers assess and record pupils' progress regularly but the planning arising from this is related more to the pupils' different ages than to their stages of learning. Additionally, teachers' marking does not show pupils the small steps they need to take to reach their targets faster. Teachers make good use of the teaching assistants to support pupils who find learning difficult for whatever reason, contributing successfully to the sound progress these pupils make. The more able pupils are not always moved on quickly enough to the more demanding work of which they are capable, especially in mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Links are starting to develop between different subjects, making learning more relevant for the pupils. These enable the school successfully to meet the needs of pupils of the same age in its mixed-age classes. However, opportunities are sometimes missed in promoting literacy and numeracy as these links are made. German, French and science, taught with support from the high school, and the good range of well attended extra-curricular activities extend and enrich the curriculum for the pupils. The curriculum also supports personal, social and health education well. The school has started to look at how it might promote pupils' understanding

of cultural diversity better in different subjects, but this work is at an early stage and not yet embedded enough to make a real difference.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Pupils are well cared for and much is in place to ensure their good behaviour and attendance. Safeguarding procedures, including those for child protection, meet current requirements. The school's good links with parents and external agencies ensure that pupils who find learning difficult, whatever the reason, are well supported. Academic guidance is less well assured. Pupils have targets and they know what they are. They understand that tests say how well they are doing and what level they are at. They report that they get additional guidance in a lesson, such as, 'read mathematics instructions more carefully' or 'keep checking your work' but are unsure about how this helps them to improve. They appreciate the debriefs at the ends of lessons but have little real understanding of how they themselves might improve their work. Teachers' marking does not help them in this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher gives clear direction for the school's work. The governing body supports her well in this. Governors have handled effectively the falling roll situation and staff turbulence, which particularly affected the leadership and management of mathematics. Governors know the school well but they do not yet check rigorously enough that the actions they have agreed are improving pupils' progress.

Through training that is now under way, middle managers are gaining an increasing understanding of their roles and responsibilities but have some way to go to be fully effective. The checks they make on teaching and learning do not always identify areas for improvement, and action plans, particularly in mathematics, are not specific enough or secure enough focused on measurable improvement in pupils' progress. This is true also of the overall school development plan. Despite this, the school has analysed how well each pupil is doing. It has raised the targets for every year group this year, rightly aiming to ensure pupils make better than expected progress, especially in mathematics. This is beginning to make staff more accountable for the school's outcomes.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. However, it has some way to go to ensure that pupils' understanding of the range and diversity of culture in the United Kingdom and wider world are at the same good level as their understanding of and contribution to the school and local community. It knows this and the other areas in which it needs to improve, and is tackling them systematically, step by step, now that staffing has stabilised.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Wood Community Primary School, Upper Tean, ST10 4JY

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. It was a delight to talk to you, to note your good behaviour and to see how much you enjoy school. We found that your school is satisfactory. That means that while it is doing all the things it should, it could do some things better to help you achieve even more.

The staff clearly care very much for each one of you and help you develop good personal skills that you will be able to take with you into adulthood. For example, you are polite and well-mannered, concentrate well on your learning in class, and show good levels of care and respect for each other and for adults. You work together well, sharing equipment and helping each other when you notice someone is stuck. You clearly appreciate the rules you have helped to draw up for the way they help the school to function in an orderly manner. You have a good understanding of what it means to follow a healthy lifestyle and it was good to hear that you feel safe and secure in school.

To help you make faster progress, especially in mathematics, we have asked the school to do the following things.

- Give you more opportunities to use your mathematical knowledge to solve problems, and to give harder work to those of you who can cope with it.
- Make sure teachers use everything they know about how well you are doing to help you learn more, and to see for yourselves how you can improve your work
- Be more precise in the wording of what actions are needed to accelerate your progress and by how much.
- Be much clearer about how those responsible for leading and managing different aspects of the school's work will check all of this.

You can help by continuing to work hard, listening to your teachers, and following the guidance you are given. We hope that by doing so, you will continue to enjoy learning now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector